

**Full Length Research**

# **Police brutality and human rights violation under Buhari's civilian administration**

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Accepted 22 November 2023

The Nigerian Police is one of the primary institutions for law enforcement and a core stakeholder in the criminal justice system of Nigeria. Hence, the expectations warrant it to respect its citizens' dignity and human rights. Yet, reports of police brutality that violate human rights have been made against them, especially under the Buhari Civilian Administration. Moreover, in 2020, under the Buhari Civilian Administration, incidents of human violations came to a headwind when citizens of Nigeria, mainly of the youthful stock, were forced to stage a countrywide protest under the tag "EndSars", culminating in the Lekki Massacre. Given reports of police brutality in Nigeria under the Buhari Civilian Administration, this study emerged to investigate the issue of police brutality and the violation of human rights in Nigeria under the Buhari civilian administration from 2015 to 2023. It does this by focusing on reports of police brutality, especially as it portends to the EndSars events and its aftermath. For its theoretical foundation, this study is anchored on the cultural transmission theory. Regarding methodology, it adopted the qualitative method employing the descriptive research design. For its findings and conclusion, it was ascertained that police brutality in Nigeria is characterised by illegal arrest and detention, extra-judicial killings, invasion of privacy, police harassment, and excessive use of force. Also, reports of police brutality in Nigeria under the Buhari Civilian Administration exist in worrying numbers, yet the existence of a comprehensive central database by the government to keep track of them is non-existent. Such inhibits the ability to track the violations of human rights in Nigeria under the Buhari Civilian Administration. Given this study's findings and conclusion, it recommends collaboration between the Nigerian government, its citizens, and non-governmental organisations as a panacea to the issue.

**Key Words:** Police, the Nigerian Police, Human Rights, Police Brutality, EndSars, the Buhari Administration

**Cite this article as:** INEH-DUMBI, M.I. (2023). Police brutality and human rights violation under buhari's civilian administration. *Int. J. Polit. Sci. Develop.* 11(2):26-35

## **INTRODUCTION**

Trends relating to indoctrinations from Nigeria's Police colonial past and its association with military rule have caused human rights violations in Nigeria via Police Brutality (Aborisade & Obileye, 2021). Such is at variance with the expectation that the Nigerian Police is the State's lead institution for enforcing law and order (i.e., inclusive

of human rights) (Obaro, 2014). However, the reality on the ground seems to paint an opposite picture, as allegations abound within the historical epoch of the Nigerian Police of brutalities that infringes citizens' human rights (Chukwu et al., 2020). In Nigeria, such allegations are more pronounced among the Nigerian Police subsidiary lead anti-robbery branch, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) (Orunbon, 2019). As a

result, SARS has become famous in Nigeria for alleged illegal detentions, extra-judicial killings, illegal search and seizure, graft, extortion, and racketeering (Ulo, 2021, p.188). Actions that led to the EndSARS protest of 2020, thereby giving the issue of police brutality a widened audience both within and outside Nigeria (Ulo, 2021).

Granted the wind of popular support on which the Nigerian federally led Buhari administration came to power in 2015 and its campaign promise of ensuring security, it was an expectation that reforming the Police and maintaining its adherence to the rule of the land, which includes respect for human rights, was going to be its major undertaking (Okolo, 2017). But unfortunately, the trend of police brutality and its outcomes of violating human rights have been re-occurring (Cole, 2021). Also, within the timeframe, of Buhari's Civilian Administration "from 2015 to 2023", the largest protest against Police Brutality in Nigeria and its implicit effects on the violation of human rights, "the EndSARS protest", occurred in 2020 (Zinat, 2021). Its outcomes suggest re-invigoration for police reforms to further re-tool it to its main duties in compliance with the norms of human rights protection (Murtala, 2019).

As such, and understanding of the relationship between police brutality and human rights violation under the Buhari's Civilian Administration is essential to understand the extends its impact on the human rights of citizens as well as the police as an institution faired under the Buhari's Civilian administrations. Its importance lies in how the Nigerian police an institutions is keeping up with its constitutional mandate of upholding Human Rights under Buhari's Civilian administrations. In doing that an examination of the track records of police brutality and Human Rights violations under the Buhari's Civilian administrations was assessed.

## WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

Given the above conceptualisation of what the Police as an institution is, it can be gleaned that they exist to further certain rights of citizens. Such Rights are termed Human Rights which were birthed by human society in the evolution of civilisation. Here, it emerged from the negative experience of man's dehumanising conduct toward his fellow man (Bowling et al., 2004). Such took from humanity the dignity of self, freedom, and choice within a society, which is fundamental, inalienable, and necessary for the pursuit of happiness and life (OHCHR, 2004). So, said led to codifying such inalienable rights into legal frameworks that aid the promotion of law and order, equity, and justice in a given society (OHCHR, 2004). Hence, human rights can be defined as a universal legal guarantee that imposes obligations to protect the dignity and freedom of individuals or groups (OHCHR, 2002). This concept is anchored on some featured characteristics to avoid uncertainty, enabling

clear identification (OHCHR, 2002). Such characteristics include;

1. It is guaranteed universally
2. It is protected by legal instruments
3. It guides the rights of individuals and groups
4. It is focused on the dignity of man
5. It is inalienable and, hence cannot be suspended, denied or waived
6. States and state actors must enforce
7. It promotes equality, universality and interdependency.

The United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), remains a prime instrument in the international system that codifies the expectation of what should constitute the human rights of people (USIDHR, 2021). It also comes with the expectation of the sacrosanct in which these rights will be protected and observed. All these and more led to the development of the concept of Human Rights.

## HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION

Likewise, it can be ascertained that flowing from the conceptualisation of Human rights above, any breach or denial of such rights by any entity or individual within a society is termed a "Human Rights Violation," which is gravely frowned upon by the international community (Ulo, 2021). Within this spectrum, violations of this sort range from genocide, torture, enforced or involuntary disappearance, extralegal, arbitrary or summary execution, arbitrary arrest and detention, and racial discrimination obligations (Bowling et al., 2004).

## POLICE BRUTALITY

Human Rights violations in the Context of Policing result majorly from Police Brutality, which covers activities perpetuated by policing authorities involving excessive or disproportionate use of policing power on society (Okoye, 2021). Such activities include genocide, torture, enforced or involuntary disappearance, extralegal, arbitrary or summary execution, arbitrary arrest and detention, and racial discrimination (Bowling et al., 2004). Hence, as mentioned above, such action by the police towards their policing public, especially regarding the violation of their rights, constitutes "police brutality." (Ulo, 2021). Moreover, its activities worldwide constitute a vast violation of the rights of citizens (Mbamala, 2022). Likewise, it can diminish the functional objective of the Police within a given society (Cole, 2021).

## THE POLICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Conceptually, it can be said that the Police and Human Rights frameworks have a mutually reinforcing relationship (Chukwu et al., 2020). As such, human rights imposes on the Police both positive and negative obligations (Bowling et al., 2004). The negative obligation elicited by the Police on human rights is the use of coercive means to restrict the liberty of individuals or groups in safeguarding society's obligations (Bowling et al., 2004). Such may enable room for misuse of policing power. And so, policing does not mean its relations with human rights are positive in all scenarios. Such is because factors exist within a societal frame that exhumes a reversal of the expected positive outcomes of said relations. Said factors can be painted in Thomas Hobbes's view that man by nature is nasty, brutish, and short (Hamilton, 2013). Also, Lord John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton reinforced Hobbes's position by stating that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely (Bowman&West, 2007)." Hence, in the case of Nigeria, given that the Nigerian Police was created under colonial rule by Britain, it was structured for regime protection (Okoye, 2019). So, that influences the Nigerian police to elicit a negative obligation to Human Rights, whose employment leads to police brutality (Ojewale, 2020).

Granted, it is not out of place to expect the Police as an institution may be subject to abuse of its authority (Aborisade & Obileye, 2017). However, abuse becomes possible due to the tendency to violate the pull factor from the police mandate, which invests it with the agency of violence to compel obedience and order. Such a responsibility can also be used as a double-edged sword. Such occurrence of the abuse by Police authority of their invested agency of violence to unjustly and forcefully intimidate or harass citizens, thereby inflicting damages on them of a physical or psychological dimension (Amnesty International Nigeria, 2020).

On the other hand, the relationship between the two concepts elicits from the Police in carrying out its activities the positive obligation to keep citizens safe and safeguarding their security obligations (Bowling et al., 2004). Such arises because the expected relationship between the Police and human rights is respected (OHCHR, 2004). Here, this calls on the Police to uphold, enforce and safeguard citizens' human rights in its duties (OHCHR, 2002). Such is because the Police's sworn duty is that of law enforcement, so it naturally subscribes to human rights protection.

## THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE

Nigeria, her Police Force originated from her colonial past, which was based on the British colonial policing system, which aimed to enforce British law and order in

the occupied colonial territory of Nigeria (Obaro, 2014). Such can be regarded as an inorganic means of establishing the Police as an institution in the colonised Nigerian society (Fraiser, 2012). And so, it can be hinted that the origin of the Nigerian Police Force was aimed not at safeguarding the rights of indigenes but that of its colonisers (Cole, 2021). So that formed a base for its institutional memories and psyche. As Nigeria obtained independence, the Nigerian Police Force took on the identity of the new state, although one shaped by various ethnicities and religious groups vying for dominance (Obaro, 2014). Such have trickled into its conduct and view of duties. During the turbulent times of Nigeria's Democracy, the "era of military rule", the Nigerian Police Force as an institution was placed under the control of several military regimes, where it once again was used to enforce an authoritarian rule against citizens, thereby serving as a vehicle for regime protection once again (Chukwu et al., 2020).

During Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999 and the emergence of the fourth republic, the Nigerian Police Force has again returned to its role of maintaining laws and orders under a civilian garment (Chukwu et al., 2020, p. 160). Such meant returning to respect for human rights, applying due process, and cooperating with citizens to carry out its functions. That was expected of the same institution used under military governance to enforce authoritarian rules without such rules of engagement. Unfortunately, the Nigerian Police could not shake off institutional practices it had learned under decades of military administration (Obaro, 2014).

## STRUCTURE OF THE NIGERIAN

In terms of structure, the Nigerian police numbers about three hundred and seventy thousand (371 800) personnel (Akpede, 2019). Such a figure is inadequate to police a country with a 2021 population of over 200 million (Statista, 2022). That is so, as the United Nations has recommended that the rate of police officers to citizens should be one (1) police officer to four hundred (400) citizens (Nwanze, 2014). The Nigerian police are also structured as a federally controlled National policing force (Onuoha et al., 2021). It means that the federating units in Nigeria, the subnational states, do not possess or control their independent police force (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Instead, the Nigerian police and policing power are federal functions, with the sub-national federating units in Nigeria serving as coordinating partners (Owen, 2014). The hierarchy of the Nigerian police force flows from the President of Nigeria, who instructs, appoints and dismisses the professional head of the Nigerian Police, the Inspector General of the Nigerian Police (IGP), with the advice and consultation of the Nigerian Police Council (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Next is the Nigerian Police Council (NPC), which is a

body made up of the President of Nigeria, Governors of federating states in Nigeria, the Inspector General of the Nigeria police (IGP), and the chairman of the Police Service Commission (PSC) (Owen, 2014). They supervise and approve the national policing policies of the Nigerian police (Owen, 2014). After this, there is the Ministry of Police Affairs, entrusted with giving administrative support to the Nigerian police and implementing the policies of the President of Nigeria and the Nigerian Police Council (NPC) (Onuoha et al., 2021). After that, next in the hierarchy is the Police Service Commission (PSC), which is saddled with the responsibility of the recruitment, appointment, promotion, discipline and dismissal of officers in the Nigerian police force, aside from the Inspector General of the Nigerian Police (IGP) (Owen, 2014). In summary, the Police Service Commission of Nigeria is in charge of personnel management of the Nigerian Police. Lastly, there is the Nigeria Police force itself, headed by the Inspector General of the Nigerian Police (IGP), who serves as the professional head of the Nigerian police and gives operational instructions to officers of the Nigerian Police (Onuoha et al., 2021).

### **THE NIGERIAN POLICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Hence, the Nigerian Police Force within the fourth republic (i.e., 1999 to date), which is the period immediately after the military rule in Nigeria, was not free from the allegation of high-handedness, abuse of power, and police brutality under the said civil rule (Okoye, 2021). The complaints from civilians, especially of a younger demographic of citizens and civil society organisations (CSO), about their brutal actions, are noted (Ekwunife et al., 2021). As alleged to be carried out by the Nigerian Police, such an incident is regarded as a violation of its citizens' constitutional and international covenant's guaranteed Human Rights (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021). An occurrence that should not be in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Within the Nigerian Police Force, the most prominent formation regularly focused on for its human rights violation track record is that of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) (Ulo, 2021). As it is popularly called in Nigeria, SARS emerged as an elite unit to fight the menace of armed robbery in Nigeria (Ekwunife et al., 2021). However, as time went on, it became regarded as a law unto itself, allegedly carrying out extra-judicial killings, illegal detention, illegal search and seizures, and a variety of actions that fit within the remits of Police brutality and the violations of rights in Nigeria (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021). Hence, clamours have been made to abolish the SARS unit and reform the Nigerian Police Force (Ojewale, 2020). Such is to reposition it to be more receptive to its core mandate and leave up to its famous slogan, "the Police is your friend", which

translates into the idea optics the Nigeria Police wants its citizens to see it as an institution (Orunbon, 2019)

### **THE NIGERIAN POLICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION**

Disproportional use of force by the Nigerian Police has led to human rights violations in Nigeria (Sotunde, 2021). Such trends can be traced back to the Nigerian Police's colonial past and its association with military rule (Ulo, 2021). That said, this should not be the case as the Nigerian Police is expected to be a significant state institution for enforcing law and order and protecting and promoting the Human Rights of citizens (Murtala, 2019). However, the reality on the ground in Nigeria seems to paint an opposite picture, as allegations abound within the historical epoch of Nigerian Police brutality that infringes on its citizens' fundamental Human Rights (Chukwu et al., 2020). Such is evident from the reports of Amnesty International Nigeria (2020) and Human Rights Watch (Amnesty International Nigeria, 2020 & Sotunde, 2021). Likewise, in 2020, the Congressional Black Caucus of the United States Congress wrote to the Buhari administration on issues of Police Brutality (Bass, 2020). They echoed reports of human rights violations related to the EndSars protest and called on the Buhari Administration to resolve them (Bass, 2020). Nonetheless, the Nigerian Police, their stated organisational expectation is that they will be in lockstep with citizens, especially regarding their rights (Orunbon, 2019). Such is best demonstrated by the regular and popularised slogan of the Nigerian Police "The police is your friend." (Orunbon, 2019; Chukwu et al., 2020).

In Nigeria, the allegation of Police violations of citizens' human rights via brutalisation is most common, especially among the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) (Zinat, 2021). It has become famous for alleged illegal detentions, extra-judicial killings, illegal search and seizure, graft, extortion, racketeering, etc. (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021). The activities of SARS in such light are so prominent that it has come to represent Police Brutality itself. The EndSARS protest of 2020 confirmed such and gave the issue a widened audience both within and outside Nigeria, with an impact that spurred further actions towards police reforms (Ulo, 2021).

Granted the wind of popular support on which the Buharicivilian administration came to power in 2015 and its campaign promise of ensuring security, it was an expectation that reforming the Police and maintaining its adherence to the rule of the land, which includes respect for human rights, was going to a significant focus of the Buharicivilian administration (Okolo & Karimo, 2017). However, despite the police reform and human rights expectations of the Buhari Administration, the trend of police brutality and its impact on the violation of human

rights has been re-occurring under the Buhari Administration (Angwe, 2016; Ojukwu, 2017; Ojukwu&Agu, 2018; Ojukwu, 2019; Ojukwu, 2020). Also, within this timeframe, the largest protest against Police Brutality and its implicit effects on the violation of human rights in 2020, during the tenure of the Buhari Administration, the EndSARS protest, took place across Nigeria (Ulo, 2021). Its outcomes suggest re-invigoration for police reforms to further re-tool it to its main duties in compliance with the norms of human rights protection.

## THE BUHARI ADMINISTRATION

The Buhari Administration is the federal executive government of Nigeria (Elumoye, 2022). It is led by the President of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari ("The Buhari Administration at 6", 2021). He was first elected in 2015, winning an election that defeated an incumbent President, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (Busari, 2017). It was also one of the first times in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (i.e. 1999 to date) that federal executive power shifted from the then-ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), to an opposition party, the All Progressive Congress (APC), (Elumoye, 2022). Likewise, it was the first instance in Nigeria's history when an incumbent President lost an election (Busari, 2017). Hence, President Buhari was sworn in for his first tenure (i.e. constitutionally set at Four years, to be re-elected once) on May 29, 2015., from where he began the composition of his government (Busari, 2017). Then, President Buhari contested for the second tenure in 2019 and won, returning to power and reconstituting his administration for the second time ("Buhari Administration at 7", 2022). In both electoral cycles, Buhari campaigned and based his administration policy on three agendas: fixing the Economy, Stabilising Security and fighting Corruption (Nwafor, 2021). Of this principle agenda of the Buhari administration, the area of prime concern to the subject matter of this study is that of Security, in which issues of policing, from the perspective of police brutality, were the mainstay issue for focus.

## REPORTS OF POLICE BRUTALITY UNDER THE BUHARI ADMINISTRATION FROM 2015 TO 2023

Since the Buhari Administration came to power through the 2015 elections in Nigeria, issues of human rights violations have been trending in the public space (Nwafor, 2021). Such violations are especially closely linked with the institution of the Nigerian Police. The Nigerian Police, especially its special operations unit, the Special Anti-robbery Squad (SARS), is notorious for this conduct (Roth, 2021).

Hence, from 2015 to 2023, various reports of cases of police brutality exist under the Buhari civilian

Administration, despite efforts by the Nigerian government to resolve them (Cole, 2021). Given that it is difficult to cite a singular centralised database source that authoritatively gives statistics of cases of police brutality in Nigeria, putting together a picture of such is based on reports from various international, national, governmental and non-governmental organisations and mediums.

Hence, reports of police brutality under Buhari's civilian administration from 2015 to 2023 can be examined from various data sources. And so, such information could be interpreted from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reports that from 2015 to 2022, where it was reported that the Nigerian police under the Buhari civilian Administration engaged in excessive and unlawful use of force, extortion and extra-judicial killings (Amnesty International Nigeria, 2020; Ojigho, 2021 & Roth, 2021).

Likewise, a report by the Council of Foreign Relations programme, "Nigeria Security Tracker", a programme aimed at tracking violence in Nigeria, identified that between March 2011 and March 2022, there were over 14,000 deaths perpetuated by State Actors in Nigeria in the form of security agencies in Nigeria (Gavin, 2022). Given the Nigerian Security Tracker report, it can be interpreted that the Nigeria Police is included as a perpetrator of such acts. Such is because they are a part of the security agencies in Nigeria. Also, the action of the Nigerian police here, as noted in the "Nigeria Security Trackers", covers the period from 2015 to 2021 under the Buhari administration.

Also, in its annual State of Human Rights Report, for 2015 to 2020, the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria highlighted various cases of human rights abuses through the acts of Police Brutality by the Nigerian Police (Angwe, 2016; Ojukwu, 2017; Ojukwu&Agu, 2018; Ojukwu, 2019; Ojukwu, 2020). In addition, in a polling survey conducted by NOI polls and published in 2020, the perception portrayed was that 77% of Nigerian citizens believe that the issue of police brutality is prevalent in Nigeria (NOI polls, 2020)

## ENDSARS UNDER THE BUHARI CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION

In several of these reports of police brutality, the Nigerian police SARS unit has been singled out as a notorious perpetrator (Cole, 2021). For the SARS unit, reports point to their targeting of a particular demography of Nigerian society when issues of police brutality are raised (Amnesty International Nigeria, 2020). Said demography is that of the youth (Zinat, 2021). This discrimination occurs in the form of illegal detentions, extra-judicial killings, police harassment, and invasion of privacy (i.e. especially of youths, where the police search phones and laptops in illicit stop and search actions) (Ojigho, 2021). Unfortunately, the Nigerian police have denied or downplayed some of these occurrences of

police brutality at various times (Aborisade & Obileye, 2021).

Hence, in protest of police brutality, Nigerian youths and other activists have campaigned to bring an end to police brutality, especially those perpetuated by SARS (Gavin, 2022). From 2015 to 2020, various such protests occurred across Nigerians (Amnesty International Nigeria, 2020). Such culminated in the EndSars protest that was in the headlines both in Nigeria and Internationally (Roth, 2021). So the EndSars became the symbol of the Nigerian citizenry's repudiation of the act of Brutality by the Nigerian Police (Gavin, 2022). The protest itself, popularised by social media as the EndSars protest began in October 2020 across various cities in Nigeria (Zinat, 2021). It lasted for several weeks and slowed down economic activities in the political and economic capital of Nigeria, Abuja and Lagos, respectively (Gavin, 2022). The EndSars protest was triggered by the shooting of a youth in Delta state, another incident of police brutality too many for Nigerian youths and activists (Mbamala, 2022). Such action triggered spontaneous protests across Nigeria and became one of the most significant events highlighting the issues of police brutality and human rights violations in Nigeria (Zinat, 2021). In response to the protest, the Nigerian government announced the disbandment of SARS and the setting up of investigating panels of Inquiry to investigate the issues of police brutality (Mbamala, 2022). As the protest continued, Nigerian citizen's demands can be summarised into a call for the reform of the Nigerian police and an end to police brutality, all of which can draw from the five demands presented to the Nigerian government by the protester (Iwuoha&Aniche, 2021, p.8). The five demands were,

- (i) The release of all protesters arrested,
- (ii) Justice and appropriate compensation for all those who died as a result of police brutality in Nigeria,
- (iii) An independent body to investigate all cases of police brutality,
- (iv) Psychological evaluations and the retraining of all members of the disbanded SARS before they are redeployed and lastly
- (v) An increase in the salary of the police (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021, p.8).

So, as the event of the EndSars protest progressed, the negotiation process to end the protest was ongoing between the government and protesters. Yet, at the Lekki tollgate in Lagos, in October 2020, Nigeria, security officials, including the Nigerian police, were accused of shooting and attacking protesters; this incident is called the Lekki Massacre (Zinat, 2021). The suspected aim of this action was an attempt to disperse and put an end to the protest. Similarly, in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city, armed thugs under the direction of the Nigerian Police

and other security agencies were said to have attacked protesters (Mbamala, 2022). Such action culminated at the end of the protest and drew international concerns and warnings to the Nigerian government (Bass, 2020). Amnesty International Nigeria highlighted some of these issues when it reported the death of 12 civilians during the EndSars protester at the hands of the Nigerian police and other security outfits in 2020 (Chow, 2020; Ulo, 2021). Thus, the EndSars protest became a medium to represent citizens' bottled-up frustration with how they faced brutalisation by the Nigeria Police. Hereafter, the incident that led to the dispersal of the EndSars protest can be expected to erode the relations that are expected to exist between the Police and citizenry, best captured in the Nigerian slogan, "The Police is your friend" (Chukwu et al). Hence, as reported by civil society organisations across Nigeria, the Nigeria Police has been alleged to be involved in extra-judicial killings, Illegal Arrest and Detention, humiliation, police harassment, extortion, and invasion of privacy (Roth, 2021).

#### **AFTERMATH OF ENDSARS UNDER THE BUHARI CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION**

The immediate aftermath of the EndSars protest saw the Nigerian government directed at the various sub-national levels of the Nigerian state, setting up an investigative panel of Inquiry to look into citizens' concerns concerning police brutality to calm the public agitations (Cole, 2021). Findings from these panels of inquiries revealed the level of human rights violations inflicted on Nigerian citizens by the Nigerian police. Accordingly, the panel were also empowered to offer compensation to victims of police brutality (Mbamala, 2022). The findings of the investigative and compensation panel in Lagos were informative. Such was because, from the report they submitted, it was deduced that they were incidents of police brutality for which victims were lawfully entitled to compensation (Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry, 2021).

Also, the Lagos panel received 238 petitions on cases of police brutality from citizens (Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry, 2021). Of note was the Lagos State investigative panel of inquiry and compensation ruling that 70 of the submitted petitions had merits and were awarded in favour of their petitioners (Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry, 2021). Likewise, compensation to the sum of four hundred and nine million, seven hundred thousand (N 409 700 000) naira was awarded as compensation to victims with substantiated claims of police brutality (Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry, 2021). The Lagos panel also noted that several of the petitions submitted before them needed more time for investigation (Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry, 2021). In addition, the panel believed that several victims of police brutality did not set forward out of fear of

repercussion (Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry, 2021).

The event scenario with the Lagos State Panel of Inquiry and compensation was replicated elsewhere in Nigeria. Such was because, similar to what occurred with the Lagos Panel of Inquiry and compensation, cases of police brutality violating the human rights of Nigerians were recorded in other parts of Nigeria (Taraba State Government, 2020). Likewise, due to the other panel of inquiry findings and compensations, compensation was therefore awarded to substantiated claims of police brutality (Ekwunife et al., 2021).

Henceforth, for the Buhari administration and the Nigerian Police, the outcomes of the various panels of inquiry reports formed an avenue for them to address the issue of police brutality in Nigeria (Elumoye, 2022). Hence, on the strength of these reports of the investigative panels of Inquiry and compensations, the Buhari administration and the Nigerian police hierarchy received several recommendations on how to go about resolving the issue of Police brutality and human rights violations in Nigeria (Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry, 2021).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts the qualitative method as it allows this research to immerse itself in works of literature to discern information relevant to the subject matter of the nature and patterns of Police Brutality under Buhari's Civilian Administration from 2015 to 2023. In doing so, this study utilised the descriptive design as its blueprint for engaging the subject matters of this research article.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theory is a tool for analysis, prediction and explanation (Bryman, 2012). In performing this role, theories help interpret events and predict future outcomes (Murray and Beglar, 2009). Hence, they become fundamental frameworks for understanding issues. This study's theoretical underpinning was based on the cultural transformation theory which is explained below;

## THE CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION THEORY

The Cultural Transformation theory emerged as a medium to understand the psychological factors that propel cultural transformation in society ("What are the three main psychological theories of crime", 2021). Such stimuli that guide the transformation and development of society are tied to societies, history, experience and exposure which result in learned behaviours that inform

the shape that society will take (Miller, 2022; Nickerson, 2022).

As a theory, the cultural transformation theory underpins the relationship between Police Brutality and Human Rights violations under the Buhari civilian administration from the perspective of learnt cultural behaviours of the Nigerian Police from Colonial times to date. Such has been embedded in the Nigeria Police as well as transformed to be susceptible to the practices of Police Brutality on its Citizens. On its path, the Nigerian population are accustomed to the occurrence of Police Brutality that became publicised with the EndSars events. The aftermath of this spurred a cultural transformation in the Nigerian Police to pursue police reform.

Likewise, the cultural transmission theory is anchored on the postulation that crime in society results from learnt socialised behaviour from a culture or a society (Nickerson, 2022). So, this theory is fixed on the belief that crime is a learned behaviour, and the transmission of that learnt behaviour from a culture or society leads to a crime and the way the crime is viewed and tackled in that society (Cultural Transmission Theory, n,d). Concerning the violation of human rights by the Nigeria Police in Nigeria, it can be deduced that the breach of a right is a learned behaviour from the policing culture in Nigeria. Said culture was influenced by the inorganic origin of the Nigerian police shaped by its colonial legacy and indoctrinations, imprints of military rule and structural issues. These all contributed to the learnt behaviour of brutalising citizens, as under colonial and military rule in Nigeria, the Nigerian police were used for such a task, and structural deficiencies do not create room for internal checks on police abuse. Such a culture also made the police an appendage of the ruling authority to perpetuate themselves in power and not serve the people. That being the case, such culture in the Nigerian police is what is transmitted as a learnt behaviour that then translates into the outcomes of police brutality, which informs the reports, nature and cause of police brutality that violates the rights of citizens, especially under the Buhari Administration from 2015 to 2023. Hence, for these learned behaviours that permit police brutality to be overcome, there is a need to create in the Nigerian police a new culture of respect for the human rights of citizens. Such is possible through re-orienting and restructuring the police and incorporating independent platforms for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the issue of police brutality in Nigeria. And so, the cultural transmission theory premise is that doing that can translate the cultural and social learning of the Nigerian police to be changed to one that arrives at a policing that respects human rights.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides an understanding of the hydra-

headed issue of police brutality by the Nigerian Police that leads to the violation of the human rights of citizens in Nigeria under the Buhari Civilian Administration. It examines the reports of police brutality by the Nigerian Police, which violates the Human Rights of Nigerians by focusing on statistical data derived from Human Rights reporting organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Council of Foreign Relations, etc. Of note, is that it focuses on the crucial incident EndSars and how it was an indictment of the Human Rights track records of the Buhari Civilian Administration. Likewise, the Aftermath of the Lekki Massacre enables an opportunity to drive Police Reform in Nigeria to address the issue of Police Brutality and Human Rights Violations, especially under the Buhari Civilian Administration. Armed with such knowledge, recommendations on the subject matter is that collaboration between the Nigerian government, its citizens, and non-governmental organisations as a panacea to the issue.

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